

Daniel's family had a long history of referrals to Child Protective Services (CPS) alleging physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect of Daniel and his sisters. At 14, Daniel understood why he was in foster care, but he was scared about the changes in his life and depressed over being separated from his family.

Fortunately, Daniel had two key things going for him to help him overcome an abusive home life and become a successful young adult: extraordinary resilience and a loving, supportive foster family. These days, Daniel says "I'm just about as good as I can be right now," and credits foster parents Wayne and Margaret Nelson with helping him get there.

The Nelsons have a plan for the kids they care for. They start by asking the children who are placed with them to set and meet small, achievable goals in order to learn success. From there they encourage their kids to "move to the next level, the next goal, the next success," so that setting and accomplishing goals becomes natural over time.

Daniel didn't feel pressured by his foster parents to get good grades, but once he met his goal of having straight A's for one semester, he kept it up. He was proud to be the first person in his family to graduate from high school.

Modeling and providing unconditional love, support, and respect is vital in caring for children. The Nelsons recognize that their kids will "get to the point where they're really succeeding well and they'll self-destruct, so you've got to be there to lift them up when they reach that point...there's nothing besides death that is that final. Everything else is repairable, and so teaching them how to overcome the hard times is the start."

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greatest to me...I have discovered that coming into foster care has been one of the best things that's ever happened to me. My life has been completely turned around, and now I realize there's people in the world that can so easily love, even though they were once strangers...I would just ask that more adults come forward and help somebody like I've been helped." *



OUR GOAL:
Continuously improve the organization's capacity to achieve excellent outcomes for children and families

*Daniel's story is one of several "Success Stories of Youth In Care." This video was produced by the Children's Administration in cooperation with the Department of Information Services, and can be viewed at the Resource Family Training Institute's video training website: www1.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/onGoingVd.asp

Supporting Foster Parents

Foster parents who feel well supported by the administration can focus their time and efforts on nurturing the children in their care, and are the administration's most effective recruiting resource. In Fiscal Year 2006, the following supports were created, implemented, or enhanced.

Improved Communication:

The administration continued to work at improving communication and teamwork between social workers and foster parents by emphasizing more regular face-to-face contact and improving notification to foster parents about meetings and court hearings that involve the children in their care. The administration is also preparing to begin an annual survey of foster parents to identify what needs improvement and what we are doing well.

Increased Training:

The administration increased the amount of training provided to foster parents before and while they are licensed. We are also expanding the availability of web-based training.

Enhanced Resources:

The administration is making the foster parent website more user-friendly, offering an electronic Listserve to deliver information to foster parents by e-mail, and providing an after-hours support/crisis line for foster parents.

The Children's Administration actively seeks qualified families who are willing to open their homes to vulnerable children until those children can either be returned to their own families or an alternative permanent plan is achieved.

Through the Resource Family Training Institute, the administration provides workshops, online training, resources, and support to both licensed foster families and unlicensed relative caregivers.

The administration monitors the objective of making adequate, quality resources available for foster care, behavior rehabilitation services, and adoption through the following measures:

- Licensed foster homes available for children.
- Availability of minority foster homes.
- Foster care licensing applications which take more than 90 days to complete.



OBJECTIVE: Adequate, quality resources are available for foster care, behavior rehabilitation services, and adoption

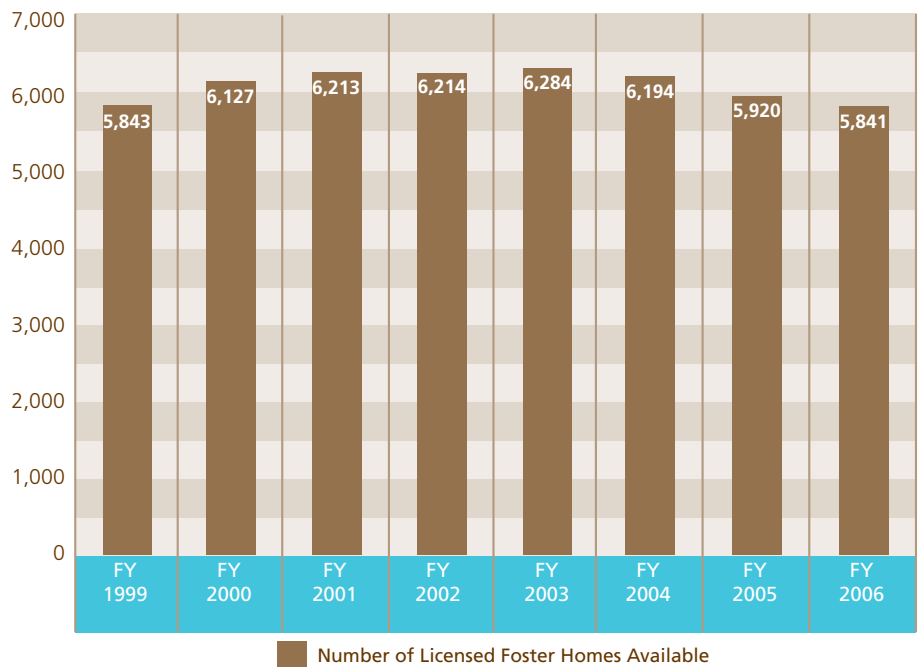
MEASURED BY: Licensed foster homes available for children

At any given time, foster families, group facilities, and relatives provide care to about 12,500 children in out-of-home care, including children in guardianships and Tribal custody. Of those, nearly 6,700 children are in licensed family foster care. These children need loving families to provide a home for them until they can return to their own home or move to a new, permanent home.

Foster homes must meet high standards of health and safety and maintain physical safeguards for children beyond the expectations of the average home. In addition, those wishing to provide care for foster children must attend training, pass rigorous background checks, and demonstrate competencies in providing for the health, security, and well-being of children.

Contracted providers work to recruit and retain foster families for the Children's Administration. These families are recruited in an effort to meet the physical, emotional, developmental, and cultural needs of children while they are in care. The administration's efforts to improve foster parent recruitment in Fiscal Year 2006 included placing an emphasis on school-based recruiting and the recruitment of homes specific to identified placement needs.

Licensed Foster Homes*

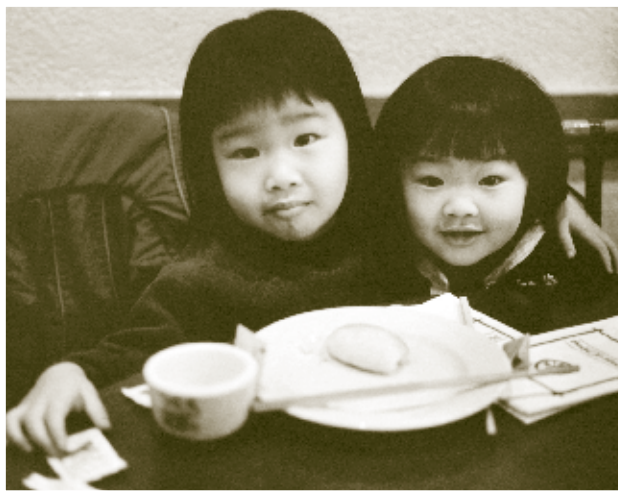


*Number of Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) and private agency foster homes licensed to provide care as of the end of the fiscal year. Source: September 2006 CAMIS download.

OBJECTIVE: Adequate quality resources are available for foster care, behavior rehabilitation services, and adoption

MEASURED BY: Availability of minority foster homes

Children who are removed from their families for their own safety and well-being often lose everything that is familiar to them. They must adapt to a changing home environment, different rules and expectations, and all new family dynamics. They may also have to adapt to new foods, a new language, and new celebrations.

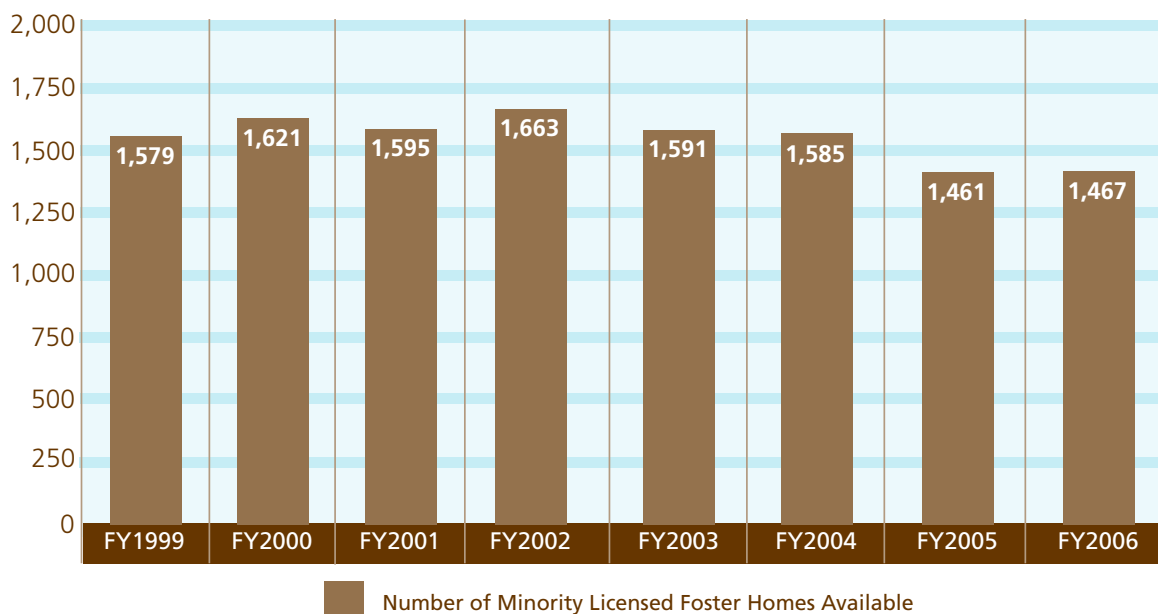


The Children's Administration strives to make the transition into foster care less difficult by trying to identify and engage foster families that are representative of the racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds of children in out-of-home care.

The administration is actively involved with its contractors and with Tribes to increase the recruitment of minority foster homes. In addition to licensing Tribal foster homes on reservations, Tribes gained the authority to license Tribal foster homes *near* reservations during Fiscal Year 2006.

Whether it is the presence of a Kwanzaa Kinara during the winter holiday or tamales served at Christmas time, the familiar foods, symbols, language and festivals of a child's culture can do much to show that they are valued and have a safe and welcoming place to be.

Minority Homes Available*



*Number of Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) and Private Agency minority foster homes licensed to provide care. Source: September 2006 CAMIS download.

OBJECTIVE: Adequate, quality resources are available for foster care, behavior rehabilitation services, and adoption

MEASURED BY: Foster homes that take more than 90 days to fully license

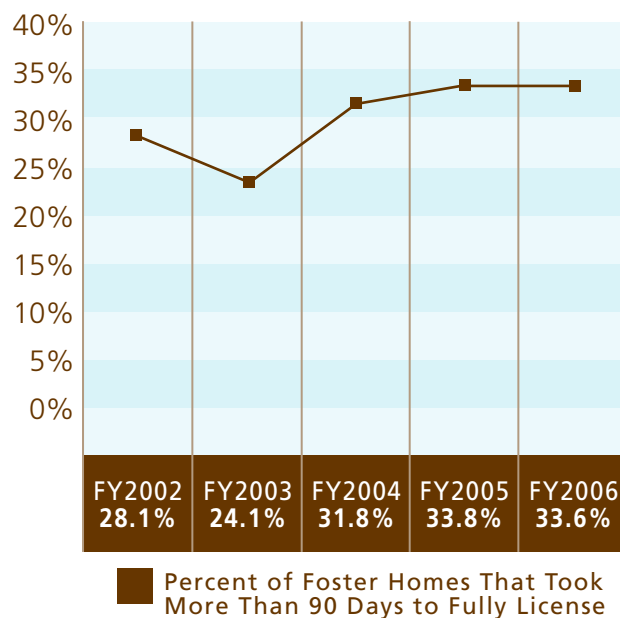
While every effort is made to ensure that families wishing to act as temporary caregivers have the necessary licensing in place as quickly as possible, child safety is the primary concern.

In addition to completing an application and attending pre-service training, potential foster families must pass background checks. If they have resided in Washington State for fewer than three years, they must also have fingerprint checks. The background check process may impede licensors from expediting a foster care license for a particular family.

Since Fiscal Year 2003, licensing delays have increased while the total number of licensed foster homes has decreased. To address our need to license more homes at a faster pace without sacrificing quality of care, we have partnered with Process Improvement Consultants from The Boeing Company to carry out a Foster Home Licensing Process Improvement Initiative. The initiative includes objectives such as improving background check processes, improving communication between the administration and our recruitment contractors, and improving retention support for foster parents.



Foster Homes That Took More Than 90 Days to Fully License*



*Percentage of fully licensed foster homes for whom it took longer than 90 days for a full license to be issued. Source: September 2006 CAMIS download.